



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 28, 2003

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
610 N.W. Loop 410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
(210) 384-7452

AUSTIN MAN POSING AS AIRLINE PILOT SENTENCED TO 36 MONTHS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR WIRE FRAUD

(Austin, Texas) **U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton** announced today that **CHARLES ANTHONY CHALLENGER**, 54, an Austin resident, was sentenced to 36 months in federal prison by U.S. District Judge Harry Lee Hudspeth for wire fraud.

Beginning in approximately October 2000, the defendant, **CHARLES ANTHONY CHALLENGER**, exploited the Internet to cultivate relationships with a number of unsuspecting women with the ultimate goal of fleecing them of thousands of dollars. The defendant would surf the internet searching for websites which contained "personal ads" of women looking for a committed relationship. The defendant would view the personal ads of these women and contact them by e-mail providing a picture of himself wearing a pilot's uniform. While the defendant initially communicated with the women by email and then telephone, he would ultimately arrange to meet the women in person.

The defendant falsely claimed he was a commercial pilot by trade and needed a substantial sum of cash either to maintain his pilot's license or start an aviation business. He would either fly to the city where the women lived or would have them visit him in Austin, providing a hotel room for their stay in Austin. During many of these visits, the defendant would wear a fake pilot's uniform to further perpetuate his fraud upon these women. After his personal encounters with the women, he would begin to ask them for "loans" which he never intended to repay.

Over the course of his scheme, he collected approximately \$57,000 from at least fourteen unsuspecting women. He fraudulently promised to pay back all the money the women loaned to him, however after receiving funds from the women, he would cease all contact with them never to repay any of the money.

Mr. Challenger pled guilty to six counts of wire fraud on November 27, 2002.

Judge Hudspeth upwardly departed from the 12-24 month sentencing range and sentenced the defendant to 36 months in federal prison due to the prior criminal history of the defendant and the likelihood that he would commit future fraud related crimes.

This case was investigated by the Internet Bureau of the Texas Attorney General's Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation and was prosecuted by Special Assistant United States Attorney John Klassen.

#####

